

"You Have to Be There"

Ways of Making Yourself Laugh



Laugh aloud right now.

Go ahead!



Everyone loves to laugh, including you. Besides, medical science has established that laughter offers numerous health benefits. It is also a great help in coping with countless difficult situations. So get started! The topic of this book is humor, so why aren't you laughing already? Treat yourself to a good, hearty belly laugh.

Perhaps you find this difficult to do. "I haven't read anything funny yet," you might be saying, "so how can I laugh?" This need not stop you. It is possible to laugh even when there is nothing funny to laugh about.

Take a lesson from actors, who must laugh uproariously when the script demands it. (This is much more difficult than crying on cue.) First, pant rhythmically like a dog. Then add an "ah" to your panting. With some practice, you will soon be able to laugh as loudly and as long as you want.

The above technique just might be the world's only sure-fire, foolproof technique for producing laughter. Jokes and humorous stories are unreliable. How often has someone told you a joke that left you cold—or even offended or embarrassed? ("You had to be there," is the familiar excuse for a misfired joke.) When it comes to humor, one person's meat is another's poison. The joke that can make *everybody* laugh, anytime, anywhere, is yet to be invented.

So this anthology does not come with a guarantee that you will laugh at every humorous selection in it. With a little luck, at least one piece will bring a giggle, a chuckle, or even an out-and-out fit of guffaws. Other pieces won't even bring a smile.

Can a comedy sketch dating to the first half of the twentieth century still tickle the funny bone? For some readers, yes.

And of course, this anthology also includes informational selections which aren't meant to be funny. Writers—especially humorists—sometimes turn oddly serious when trying to explain the nature of laughter.

But you can learn something even from selections in this book that don't make you laugh. There is at least one human being who has laughed at every humorous piece included here, and the more serious pieces may help you understand why this is so.

This is good. Finding out what amuses other people is one of the most important things you can learn about the human species. For indeed, laughter is one of the defining traits of a human being. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle declared that of all living creatures, only humans laugh. Countless thinkers since his time have echoed the sentiment.

So to be a more *human* being, the thing to do is laugh. If you want to laugh right now, you know how to do it. Just pant like a dog and vocalize until the laughter starts. But you're not likely to enjoy it very much. You'll probably feel as if you missed the point of a joke. To really enjoy a gale of laughter, you simply "have to be there."

Take a chance on this anthology. Your quest for something funny may seem hit-and-miss from time to time. But sooner or later, real laughter will hit, and you'll have a great time.